

ADDITIONAL RECORDS OF MARINE FISHES FROM ALLIGATOR HARBOR, FLORIDA, AND VICINITY

RALPH W. YERGER

The Florida State University

The establishment of marine laboratories at many localities along the coast from Florida to Texas has greatly accelerated the study of fishes in the Gulf of Mexico during the last decade. Whereas previous knowledge of distribution often depended on short term studies or inadequate samples from widely scattered areas, students of zoogeography now have available year-round collections from numerous stations separated from each other by relatively short distances. On the west and north coasts of Florida, investigations of the fish fauna have been made, or are continuing, at Cape Haze, Tampa Bay, Cedar Key, Alligator Harbor, and Panama City. Publications resulting from these studies have been cited in a recent comprehensive work on the fishes of the Tampa Bay area (Springer and Woodburn, 1960).

This present list of fishes is a supplement to an earlier paper on the fishes of Alligator Harbor (Joseph and Yerger, 1956). This locality in Franklin County, Florida, is the site of the main laboratory of the Oceanographic Institute at Florida State University. Several species previously recorded in outside waters have now been taken inside the harbor. Others are new records for the area, especially in the vicinity of Whistle "26" Buoy, located approximately ten miles south of the harbor.

All common names of fishes used conform with the approved list published by the American Fisheries Society (1960).

Specimens with an FSU catalog number are in the Florida State University Fish Collection. Other records are reports from competent field biologists. From a scientific point of view, it is little less than tragic that the gourmet's skillet frequently was given priority over the ichthyologist's preserving jar. Acknowledgements to other collectors are made under the appropriate species. All measurements refer to standard length in millimeters.

ANNOTATED LIST

CLUPEIDAE—Herring Family

Alosa chrysochloris (Rafinesque). Skipjack herring.

A 131 mm. specimen (FSU 6354) was collected on May 14, 1960, in a recently dredged boat channel one-quarter mile west of the FSU Marine Laboratory.

Dorosoma cepedianum (LeSueur). Gizzard shad.

The species has been seined from the harbor on several occasions by R. W. Menzel. One 189 mm. specimen (FSU 2556) was collected April 5, 1957.

A small series of adults (FSU 6382) was taken from the same boat channel as the skipjack herring on May 14, 1960. These specimens varied from 215 to 239 mm.

EXOCOETIDAE—Flyingfish Family

Prognichthys gibbifrons (Valenciennes). Bluntnose flyingfish.

A 99 mm. juvenile (FSU 6554) was collected by R. W. Menzel on October 1, 1960, at St. Teresa, just west of the mouth of Alligator Harbor. This specimen was taken in a 50 foot minnow seine from water less than 3 feet deep and only a few feet from shore. Flyingfishes are occasionally observed in waters several miles offshore, but this is the first record in shallow tidal waters along this part of the Gulf Coast.

CENTROPOMIDAE—Snook Family

Centropomus undecimalis (Bloch). Snook.

R. W. Menzel reported the capture of a snook in a crab fyke 400 yards west of the Marine Laboratory. The date was not recorded. This is the only species of snook known to occur in the northern Gulf. While occasionally reported from the Panama City area in Bay County, it is uncommon in the northern Gulf north of Levy County (Marshall, 1958).

SERRANIDAE—Sea bass Family

Centropristes striatus melanus Ginsburg. Southern sea bass.

In an earlier paper (Joseph and Yerger, 1956), this species was listed (as *C. melanus*) as occurring outside Alligator Harbor. It is common over rocky bottoms in the vicinity of Whistle "26" Buoy.

Four young and juvenile specimens (FSU 2051), 7 to 60 mm. long, were taken on a sand bar near the mouth of the harbor on May 16, 1954. In all probability the young invade harbor waters more commonly than the records indicate.

Serranellus subligarius (Cope). Belted sandfish.

Joseph Branham has collected a number of "reef" fish in aqua-lung explorations of off-shore habitats. A 59 mm. specimen of the belted sandfish (FSU 3279) was captured from a rocky ledge two miles southeast of the Whistle "26" Buoy, on May 30, 1957. This ledge consists of a limestone ridge about one foot high, with scattered boulders, at a depth of about 45 feet.

The species is common around the jetties in St. Andrews Bay at Panama City 100 miles west.

Mycteroperca microlepis (Goode and Bean). Gag.

The gag was previously listed as occurring outside harbor waters (Joseph and Yerger, 1956). A 227 mm. specimen (FSU 4921) was collected in a crab pot at the end of the Marine Laboratory pier by Keitz Haburay on August 2, 1958. While fairly common offshore over rocky bottom, this species probably rarely enters the harbor where the bottom consists largely of mud.

LOBOTIDAE—Tripletail Family

Lobotes surinamensis (Bloch). Tripletail.

Marvin Wass reported that a specimen was captured in a fyke net at the sandbar 400 yards west of the Marine Laboratory on October 4, 1955. Richard Durant has observed specimens up to 20 inches in length floating on their sides in harbor waters during September and October.

SCIAENIDAE—Drum Family

Equetus acuminatus (Bloch and Schneider). Cubbyu.

Two small specimens (FSU 3278), 20 and 65 mm., were collected by Joseph Branham near the Whistle "26" Buoy on May 30, 1957, in the same area as previously described for the belted sandfish.

POMACENTRIDAE—Damsel fish Family

Eupomacentrus variabilis (Castelnau). Cocoa damselfish.

Two juveniles (FSU 6023), 17 and 21 mm. were collected at the Whistle "26" Buoy by Joseph Branham on May 30, 1957, in associ-

ation with the belted sandfish and cubbyu. These damselfish were identified by Loren P. Woods of the Chicago Natural History Museum.

ISTIOPHORIDAE—Billfish Family

Istiophorus albicans (Latreille). Atlantic sailfish

Sailfish are taken every summer by sport fishermen along the northern Gulf Coast from Destin, Florida (Okaloosa County) westward. But the capture of four sailfish in the Big Bend region between July 20 and August 2, 1959 is believed to be the first record in this area. All were caught in Gulf waters approximately seven miles southeast of Alligator Point. They ranged in size from three to five feet.

SCORPAENIDAE—Scorpionfish and Rockfish Family

Scorpaena calcarata Goode and Bean. Smoothhead scorpionfish.

A 108 mm. specimen (FSU 4910), was taken on rod and reel by R. B. Short, on October 11, 1958, while fishing in the vicinity of Whistle "26" Buoy.

DACTYLOSCOPIDAE—Sand stargazer Family

Dactyloscopus tridigitatus Gill. Sand stargazer.

In January 1957, Ray Damian collected a 44 mm. specimen (FSU 2560) of this strange fish just offshore from Alligator Peninsula, at a depth of 10 feet. Since this apparently was the first record in the northern Gulf, the specimen was sent to James E. Böhlke at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia who confirmed this identification.

STROMATEIDAE—Butterfish Family

Poronotus triacanthus (Peck). Butterfish.

Several lots (40 specimens) of butterfish (FSU 2418, 2184, 3226, 4538, 3245, 3212) have been taken in different years, from early April to the middle of May. Seine and trawl collections from the harbor and from Mud Cove, on the Gulf side of Alligator Peninsula, have yielded juveniles varying from 44 to 67 mm. in size.

SPHYRAENIDAE—Barracuda Family

Sphyraena borealis DeKay. Northern sennet.

A 46 mm. young (FSU 4922) was collected in a 150 foot minnow

seine by R. W. Menzel on March 29, 1956, on the harbor beach just west of the Marine Laboratory. This identification was verified by Donald De Sylva of the University of Delaware.

TETRAODONTIDAE—Puffer Family

Lagocephalus laevigatus (Linnaeus). Smooth puffer.

A newspaper article in the Tallahassee Democrat on June 22, 1958 carried this interesting description of a freak caught by a local fisherman. "It was built on the lines of a whale, but no hole in the head, a very small sucker-type mouth. It was vari-colored on the sides with a black and white belly. The forepart of the belly was rough and the fish was scaleless."

The 310 mm. specimen (FSU 3714) was caught on a rod and reel by D. L. Anderson of Tallahassee, on June 20, 1958, at the mouth of Alligator Harbor. At about the same time, another specimen was taken about 15 miles northeast of Alligator Harbor near the St. Marks Light. Apparently it is rarely encountered, for the fishermen in the area are not familiar with it.

BATRACHOIDIDAE—Toadfish Family

Opsanus pardus (Goode and Bean). Leopard toadfish.

F. C. W. Olson collected a 164 mm. specimen (FSU 2548) in the Gulf about 14 miles SSE of St. Marks Light, from a depth of 35 to 40 feet, on July 3, 1955. Many additional records are available from areas to the west, so that it may be assumed the species is more common in offshore waters than collections would indicate.

Porichthys porosissimus (Cuvier). Atlantic midshipman.

A specimen (FSU 1387), 103 mm., was taken near the Whistle "26" Buoy, on October 18, 1952 by H. J. Humm and W. J. Hargis, Jr. Shrimp trawlers operating in waters adjoining Alligator Peninsula capture considerable numbers of this species, and recent uncataloged collections include many adults.

LITERATURE CITED

AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY

1960. A list of common and scientific names of fishes from the United States and Canada. 2nd Ed. Amer. Fish. Soc. Spec. Publ. No. 2: 1-102.

JOSEPH, EDWIN B., and RALPH W. YERGER

1956. The fishes of Alligator Harbor, Florida, with notes on their natural history. Fla. State Univ. Stud., No. 22: 111-156.

MARSHALL, ARTHUR R.

1958. A survey of the snook fishery of Florida, with studies of the biology of the principal species, *Centropomus undecimalis* (Bloch). Fla. State Bd. Cons., Tech. Ser., 22: 1-37.

SPRINGER, VICTOR G., and KENNETH D. WOODBURN

1960. An ecological study of the fishes of the Tampa Bay area. Fla. State Bd. Cons., Prof. Papers Ser., No. 1: v + 1-104.